



Statements and Speeches

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INITIATIVES FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

Remarks by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister, in the House of Commons, Ottawa, February 9, 1984

When the first atomic bomb exploded in a New Mexico desert in 1945, life itself changed. Man gave himself the power of his own destruction.

Never again would children be free from fear of the bomb. Never again would we parents be able to reassure them, nor to calm our own anxieties.

A nuclear war would make no distinction between the sides of this House on which we find ourselves, between right and wrong, between rich or poor, between east or west, north or south.

Nuclear weapons exist; they probably always will — and they work, with horrible efficiency. They threaten the very future of our species. We have no choice but to manage that risk. Never again can we put the task out of our minds; nor trivialize it; nor make it routine. Nor dare we lose heart.

Managing the threat of nuclear war is the primordial duty of both East and West. But Canadians are concerned that the superpowers may have become diverted from this elemental responsibility: that they may be too caught up in ideological competition, in endless measurements of parity, in trials of strength and will. Canadians also know it would be foolhardy to expect that animosity between East and West will somehow disappear this side of the point of no return.

The experts would have us believe that the issues of nuclear war have become too complex for all but themselves. We are asked to entrust our fate to a handful of high priests of nuclear strategy. And to the scientists who have taken us from atom bombs to thermonuclear warheads, from missiles with one warhead to missiles with ten and more, from weapons that deter to weapons that threaten the existence of us all.

Canadians, and people everywhere, believe their security has been diminished, not enhanced, by a generation of work spent on perfecting the theories and instruments of human annihilation.

But technological push too often finds a sympathetic political pull. It is leaders who decide on defence budgets and research budgets; it is leaders who must direct; it is leaders who must assert their will for peace, or science will devise ever more lethal weapons systems.

Canadian security is at stake; and Canada has earned the right to be heard, in peace time and in war. Thousands of Canadians fought and died in two world wars that Canada had no hand in starting. We helped to shape the postwar world — at Bretton Woods, where the World Bank was launched; and at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco, where the United Nations organization was born.